

# - THE WILD HUNT -

## PAGAN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES

Home News Culture & Living TWH Features Perspectives About the Wild Hunt Contact Us

### PAGANISM

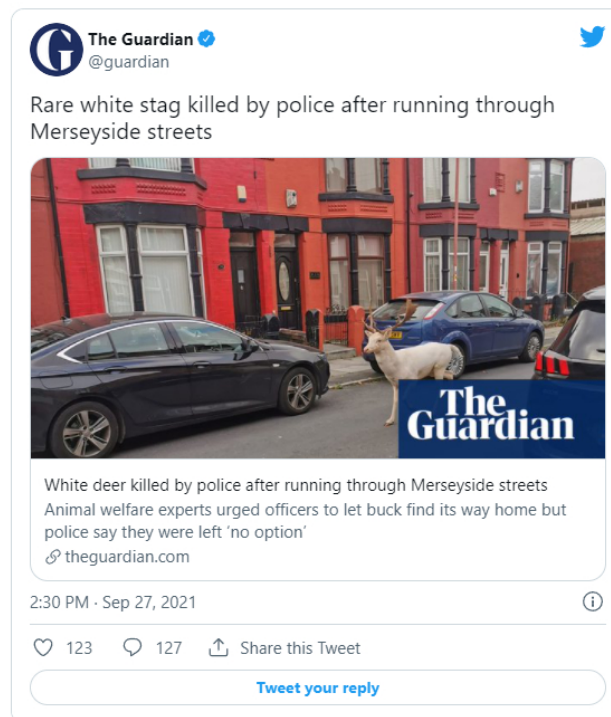
## Killing of a rare white stag in England upsets some Pagans

By Liz Williams | October 7, 2021

The Wild Hunt is exclusively supported by readers like you. No advertising. No corporate sponsors. Your support helps us pay our writers and editors, as well as cover the bills the keep the lights on. We cover the community because of your generosity. Consider making a one-time donation - or become a monthly sustainer. Every amount helps. Thank you for reading The Wild Hunt!

[Click here to donate](#)

LIVERPOOL, England – Both the Pagan and the wider United Kingdom community were horrified to learn of the demise of a rare white stag on the streets of Bootle, near Liverpool, this month.



Bootle is an urban environment, and one of the last places in the country where you might expect to find deer running freely, but somehow the animal managed to get lost in the maze of streets. The stag's presence was reported, and it was cornered by police in an industrial estate who were concerned that the animal would be hit by a car. They involved a vet in this endeavour, but the RSPCA (Royal Society for the Protection of Animals) had already advised the police to leave the stag alone as he would find his own way back home eventually. The police say, however, that they were unable to find an organisation who could assist with securing the fallow buck, and ended up shooting it.

A police spokesman said that the animal became distressed, and that, "There was no option to let the deer wander as it could be a danger to motorists and members of the public in the area, particularly as the hours of darkness approached. As a result a decision was made in the early evening to euthanise the deer."

The RSPCA says that there are issues with sedation as "this needs to be done with caution in a public area such as this one, as the deer could startle and run when hit by the dart. This could create a bigger public safety and animal welfare issue."

The RSPCA added that, "Although deer traditionally live in forests, moors and parkland, they are becoming more common in urban environments across the UK."

White deer are rare in the UK. They are usually fallow deer, a breed of deer that tends to have wider pigmentation than roe or other deer, for example, because this type were bred in hunting parks, resulting in a more extensive variety of coat colour. They are not albinos, but have lower levels of melanin in their coats. Some may have a condition called leucism, which causes a lack of pigmentation.



White fallow deer – Image credit: Jenny Gilleland – CC BY-SA 2.0

White deer feature heavily in the legends of Britain, and more widely, too: the Siberian tribes hold that certain white reindeer (though not all) are sacred. There's an account of a shaman being suckled by a white reindeer during his initiatory vision in a bird's nest in the tree that links the earth and the heavens.

These kinds of belief spread across Russia and the Caucasus: as an example, we have the Georgian goddess Dali, who can also take animal form and who is a goddess of hunting and the protectress of hoofed game animals like mountain goats and indeed deer.

One of her preferred animal forms is a white deer. She is rather like a fairy in that she can make herself larger than normal human size or much smaller – a quality she shares with fairies in British legend, too. Like the Greek Artemis, she sometimes extracts some nasty revenges on men who harm her flock, such as those who kill does with young, for example.

In Hungarian mythology, the founders of the Magyar, Hunor and Magor, chased a white stag in a hunt. The stag led them into an unknown land that they named Scythia. Further east, a white deer is the symbol of the Japanese city of Nara and seen as a divine messenger.

Whether these legends are in any way connected must remain moot: parallel development of myth can obviously occur and does not necessitate a causal connection.

However, a common theme of many of these myths – and one that is carried in Celtic belief also – is that to kill a white deer is a transgression of some natural law and will result in bad luck. Some authorities claim that the very appearance of a white deer heralds ill fortune, since the animal is itself a violation of nature.

Early myths persist: the image of the white hart as a questing beast is found throughout Medieval legends in Britain. It is the symbol of Richard II, and features in an image called the Wilton Diptych. On the back of this, there is a white hart depicted on a bed of rosemary, symbolising sorrow and remembrance.

King David I of Scotland built Holyrood House in Edinburgh after an encounter with a white hart. And Herne the Hunter is sometimes said to take the form of a white hart.

The white hart has also found its way into more contemporary culture. Baden-Powell, addressing the Scout movement, stated in 1933 that:

"The White Stag has a message for you. Hunters of old pursued the miraculous stag, not because they expected to kill it, but because it led them in the joy of the chase to new and fresh adventures, and so to capture happiness. You may look on the White Stag as the true spirit of Scouting, springing forward and upward, ever leading you onward to leap over difficulties, to face new adventures in your active pursuit of the higher aims of Scouting."  
— Baden-Powell's farewell speech to the Scouts

Harry Potter fans will know it as Harry's patronus; the white hart features regularly throughout the series, and it is a white deer which leads the Pevensie children back from their sojourn in Narnia to their own wartime world.



Image credit: [Shaurya Singh](#) from [Pixabay](#)

The Pagan community of the UK are united in condemning the shooting of the stag. It is widely felt that the animal could have been better contained, particularly on an industrial estate (these are often fenced in for security reasons, although it's not clear that this applied to the one in Bootle).

Aside from the tragedy of the individual animal, it is also felt that this is a very bad sign. We asked what people thought and had a number of responses

Druid Warren Brown told *TWH*, "Possibly the most stupid thing the UK has done in recent years."

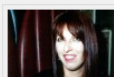
"Quite simply you have no idea what you have done. The storm that is coming from your act of willful destruction," said Rose of London.

"Very bad news indeed," Mel, a U.K. Pagan agreed.

There is a general consensus that this was a needless tragedy, and that for the UK's Pagan community, it has a symbolic resonance which may persist for months to come.

**FILED UNDER:** [LIVING](#) | [NEWS](#) | [PAGANISM](#) | [U.K.](#) | [WITCHCRAFT](#) | [WORLD](#) | [ARTEMIS](#) | [CELTIC](#)  
[MYTHOLOGY](#) | [GODDESS DALI](#) | [HOLYROOD HOUSE](#) | [WHITE STAG](#)

#### ABOUT LIZ WILLIAMS



Liz Williams is a professional writer and, with her partner, runs a witchcraft supply business and bookshop in Glastonbury, England. She has written for the Guardian and other publications on Pagan themes, and is a member of various Pagan organisations, including the Order of Bards, Druids and Druids.





the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids.



More by Liz



### Previous Post

Round-up of far-reaching impact of a dwindling Colorado River



### Next Post

Biden proclaims October 11 as Indigenous Peoples' Day

#### The Wild Hunt Comment Policy

Please read our [Comment Policy](#) before commenting.



Comments for this thread are now closed



13 Comments

The Wild Hunt

Disqus' Privacy Policy

Login

Recommend 2

Tweet

Share

Sort by Oldest



Poseidonas Ouranios · 2 days ago

Really bad sign/omen for a land facing a difficult time, I think... killing a beast of "féeerie", in any medieval "fabliau" or trouvère's song was regarded as asking for abominable trouble...and I'm inclined to believe it in this case...

3 ^ | v · Share



Gallifreyan Tauri · Poseidonas Ouranios · 2 days ago

So for Britain, something worse than Brexit is coming? Not surprised.

2 ^ | v · Share



Poseidonas Ouranios · Gallifreyan Tauri · a day ago

Don't know, but viewed from the rest of Europe, and notably from my french perspective, the submarine market highjacking in profit of US was a shit move on a geopolitical plan...remembers the Irak move etc... Killing a magical beast cannot help this shitty atmosphere...

1 ^ | v · Share



Baruch Dreamstalker · 2 days ago

*Possibly the most stupid thing the UK has done in recent years*

Given Brexit, that's a high bar.

6 ^ | v · Share



kenofken · Baruch Dreamstalker · 2 days ago

Don't forget London's police force feeling the need to warn women against lone officers after one of them raped and murdered someone on duty.

When law enforcement has to advise law abiding people to run from them, there's a bit of a problem with the culture of the organization.

7 ^ | v · Share



blaktauna · 2 days ago

A total disgrace. That poor creature should have been helped not destroyed.

3 ^ | v · Share



OstaraQueen · 2 days ago

I suppose their vets don't have fast acting tranquilizer darts? Pulees! that's the lamest excuse for shooting that I've heard in a long time. Yup, I agree - bad juju coming their way. A white stag in that much of an urban area is not an accident, feels more like a test. They flunked.

2 ^ | v · Share



Baruch Dreamstalker · OstaraQueen · a day ago

Might the problem be expansion of urbanization into the wild? In the US we build houses in fire zones, India has a chronic problem with mankiller large animals, and pressing into undeveloped zones in Africa unleashes epidemics. I'm not up on the UK situation.

2 ^ | v · Share



A. Marina Fournier · OstaraQueen · 18 hours ago

Tranquilizer darts would have been my first choice. In Monterey County CA, bears and mountain lions are tranked and relocated to where they should be, barring any attacks.

^ | v · Share



Ellen Evert Hopman · a day ago

Here in the US we run into this same situation with bears. Why they can't just tranquilize them escapes me. Certain types think guns solve every problem.

3 ^ | v · Share



Lokisgodhi · Ellen Evert Hopman · 18 hours ago

Because bears quickly find their back from where ever they're moved.  
 ^ | v - Share >

 **A. Marina Fournier** ↗ Ellen Evert Hopman · 18 hours ago

Actually in the Greater SF Bay Area, bears & mountain lions are tranked and relocated. Some time in the early '90s a bear wandered into a BigBox Mall in Seaside in Monterey County, and was tranked and relocated. Perhaps he wanted to smell the coffee better, or see what samples were offered at the CostCo there.

The bear came down from the mountains,  
 The bear came down from the mountains,  
 The bear came down from the mountains,  
 Almost to Monterey Bay.

Almost to Monterey Bay,  
 Almost to Monterey Bay,  
 Oh, the bear came down from the mountains,  
 Almost to Monterey Bay.

Oh, they surrounded the bear and they tranked him,  
 They surrounded the bear and they tranked him,  
 They surrounded the bear and they tranked him,  
 And sent him back to his home.

And sent him back to his home,  
 And sent him back to his home,  
 They surrounded the bear and they tranked him,  
 And sent him back to his home!

^ | v - Share >

 **Govannon Thunorwulf** · 15 hours ago

This was a poor choice fo sure. I would have chosen to tranquilize it and have a shooter ready rather than just shooting it. They took the easy way out, it seems to rampant these days.

1 ^ | v - Share >

---

 [Subscribe](#)
 [Add Disqus to your site](#)
 [Do Not Sell My Data](#)

**DISQUS**

#### ABOUT THE WILD HUNT

[About The Wild Hunt](#)  
[The Wild Hunt Mission Statement](#)  
[The Wild Hunt Team](#)  
[Frequently Asked Questions](#)  
[Where Do Your Donations Go?](#)

#### THE WILD HUNT SECTIONS

[Latest News](#)  
[Pagan Community News](#)  
[Editorials & Columns](#)  
[Arts & Culture](#)

#### CONNECT WITH US

[Join our Email List](#)  
[Like us on Facebook](#)  
[Follow us on Twitter](#)



© Copyright 2021, The Wild Hunt

Built with the [Largo WordPress Theme](#) from the [Institute for Nonprofit News](#).